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III.—SUBMERGED TABELLAE DEFIXIONUM.

Many tabellae defixionum have been found in ancient wells and springs, and still others bear evidences of having been originally thrown into water.¹ Moreover, directions are given in several passages of the Magic Papyri that defixiones (κάτοχοι, κατάδεσμοι) are to be cast either into a grave or into some body of water, natural or artificial.² The purpose of this custom was, according to Wünsch, "*ut per quam (i. e. aquam) via pateret ad manes eorum, qui naufragio perierunt*".³ This explanation is accepted by Audollent⁴ and is in line with that advanced by Hubert.⁵ We, too, regard it as true—as far as it goes—but can hardly grant that it is adequate, for it leaves the origin of the custom still in its primitive obscurity.

The leading social anthropologists are agreed that the association of demons, spirits, or divinities with magic rites is a secondary and comparatively late development.⁶ The earliest magic was

¹ Audollent, Auguste, *Defixionum Tabellae*, Paris, 1904, nos. 22-37; 104; 105; 109; 110; 114-120; 129; 262; Wünsch, Richard, *Defixionum Tabellae Atticae*, I. G. III 3, nos. 27; 28; 52.

² Wessely, C., *Griechische Zauberpapyrus von Paris und London*, *Denkschrift d. kais. Akad. d. Wissenschaften zu Wien*, phil.-hist. Klasse, XXXVI, 1888, 2te Abt., 27 ff.; *Pap. Anast.* 351; id., *Neue Gr. Zauberpapyri*, *Denk. d. k. Akad. d. W. zu Wien*, phil.-hist. Kl., XLII, 1893, 96 ff., 443 ff., 456 ff.

³ D. T. A., pr. iv.

⁴ D. T., pr. cxvii.

⁵ See under *Magia*, p. 1511, Daremberg et Saglio, *Dict. des Ant. grec. et rom.*

⁶ " Though magic was thus found to fuse and amalgamate with religion in many ages and in many lands, there are some grounds for thinking that this fusion is not primitive, and that there was a time when man trusted to magic alone for the satisfaction of such wants as transcended his immediate animal cravings." J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (1911) I, p. 233; cf., pp. 234-235 and p. 235, n.; "La magie sympathique se suffit à elle-même et la magie démoniaque lui est postérieure" Edmond Doutté, *Magie et Religion dans l'Afrique du Nord*, Algiers, 1908, p. 308; cf. p. 307. Years ago Hegel reached the same conclusion by a very different process; see his *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, I, pp. 220 ff. (vol. XI of the first collected edition of Hegel's works, Berlin, 1832); and Frazer, op. cit., I, p. 423, app.

based solely on the unshaken belief in the efficacy of symbolism. And this is everywhere and at all times the very heart of magic.¹ An act producing a result analogous to a certain desired result, would of itself, according to this belief, under certain prescribed conditions, produce this desired result. This made primitive man a veritable potentate. Moreover, he was scientific so far as he believed in the control of these processes by immutable laws; but he was unscientific so far as he equated analogy and identity. Each man was his own magician for good or evil. But in time he became sensitive to his own limitations and slowly acquired the habit of reinforcing his symbolism by appeals to his deities or by binding them to his service. This addition of one of the elements of religion banished from magic its primitive simplicity and implanted in its place a complex system which finally was elaborated into a ritual.² In the mystic haze of this "Götterdämmerung" the primal meaning of many an ancient symbol was, little by little, lost to view and finally forgotten.

Now any one who accepts this theory must admit that Wünsch's explanation of the custom of throwing defixiones into the water relates only to advanced stages of magic. What, then, is the primary stage which this explanation fails to touch? It is the purpose of this paper to determine, if possible, what it is; and if in the process of determination we frequently go outside the narrow field of defixiones into the broader ranges of general magic, it is because in the last analysis all magic rests on the same principles.³ Defixiones were, in reality, only a highly specialized form of magic confined largely to the Greco-Roman world.

But there are other grounds for believing that Wünsch's explanation is not fundamental. The defixiones which he uses in its support belong without exception to a late period where a contamination of magic and religion was the rule. Nos. 104⁴

¹ "Tout acte magique a pour but, soit de mettre des êtres vivants ou des choses dans un état tel que certains gestes, certains accidents, ou certains phénomènes doivent s'ensuivre infailliblement, soit de les faire sortir d'un état analogue." Hubert, *op. cit.*, p. 1518; cf. Morris Jastrow, *Religion in Babylonia and Assyria*, New York, 1911, p. 305.

² This does not commit me to the theory of the magical origin of religion.

³ "Il n'est pas possible de séparer les gestes et les actes symboliques des rites verbaux, oraux ou écrits, quels que soient leurs noms, incantations ou prières." Hubert, *op. cit.*, p. 1518.

⁴ = Eph. Epig. VII, p. 278, no. 827; Hübner, *Exempla*, 947.

and 129¹ of Audollent's collection are assigned to the second century A. D.; likewise the famous tablet from Salernum,² which, while not consigned to the water itself, embodies in its formula the submersion of a hair belonging to the intended victim. The remaining tablets of this class give no hint as to the mental processes of the defigentes. With only one exception, all the other references cited by Wünsch³ and Hubert⁴ are drawn from sources ranging from the first century to the eleventh century of our era. The exception is found in the ancient Hylas-legend, which is probably one of the many forms of the cult of the dead.⁵ This shows that Wünsch's explanation might possibly apply to pre-Christian magical operations, yet it is altogether too indirect in its bearing and of too uncertain an antiquity to allow one to deduce from it alone their initial signification.

We shall now consider a number of magic practices, ancient, medieval, and modern. For very obvious reasons they will be presented as far as possible in chronological order.

Among the Assyrians a man was regarded as possessing a very effective counter-charm if he placed little images in the model of a ship floating in a basin, and then broke the model to pieces to the accompaniment of the following formula :

"She who hath bewitched me, hath laid me under a spell,
Hath cast me into the river flood,
Hath cast me into the river depth,
Unto the witch hath said 'Bewitch',
Unto the enchantress hath said 'Enchant',
May this be as her ship,
Like this ship may she be wrecked,
May her spell be wrecked, and upon her
And upon her image may it recoil,
May her cause fail, but let mine succeed."⁶

Of the same character is an operation described in the Old Testament (Jer. li, 60-64): "So Jeremiah wrote in a book all

¹ = CIL XI 1823.

² Aud. 210 = CIL X 511; cf. Wünsch, D. T. A., pr. xxix, col. i.

³ Viz.: Kaibel, Epigr., 571 (D. T. A. pr. xxix); Diog. Laer. VIII, § 31; Lyd. de mens. IV, 52; Paus. II 37, 5; Magic Pap., see p. 301, n. 2 (D. T. A., pr. iv).

⁴ Eunap. in Porph., p. 10; Greg. Nyss. V, Greg. Thaum., 308; Psellus *περὶ ἐνεργ. δαμ.*, ed. Boissonade, p. 21, n. 2 (op. cit., p. 1511, n. 5).

⁵ G. Türk, De Hyla, Diss., Breslau, 1895; E. Maass, Deut. Litt.-Zeit., XVII (1896), 7 ff. (Wünsch, D. T. A. pr. iv).

⁶ J. C. Thompson, Semitic Magic, p. 154.

the evil that should come upon Babylon, *even* all these words that are written against Babylon. And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words; Then shalt thou say, O Lord, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever. And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, *that* thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates: and thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her.¹

To the same class virtually belongs the famous oath of the Phocaeans, for, says Wellhausen, "Der Eid ist ein eventueller Fluch, sei es dass man sich selbst verflucht, oder, wie bei der Beschwörung, Andere".² These loyal Hellenes cast into the sea a mass of molten iron and said: "μὴ πρὶν ἐς Φωκαίην ῥῆξιν, πρὶν ἢ τὸν μύδρον (i. e. σιδήρεον) τοῦτον ἀναφῆναι".³ When Xerxes cast the fetters into the Hellespont⁴ he was restraining it with a twofold bond; first, through the significance of the fetters themselves, and in the second place through the symbolic power of the fact that they would sink too deep in the water for the angry waves of the surface to control them. We shall later on consider a modern instance analogous to this.⁵

It is related by the Pseudo-Callisthenes⁶ that the last native king of Egypt, Nectanebus (358 B. C.), whenever his country was threatened with invasion, would fill a bronze vessel with water to resemble the sea. In it he floated tiny ships of wax that represented the fleet of the enemy, and in the ships he placed small waxen figures of men; then . . . ἐπεκαλεῖτο ὡσανεὶ τοὺς θεοὺς τῶν ἐπρωδῶν, καὶ τὰ ἀέρια πνεύματα καὶ τοὺς καταχθονίους δαίμονας. Καὶ τῇ ἐπρωδῇ ἔμπνοα ἐγίνοντο τὰ ἀνθρωπάρια ἐν τῇ λεκάνῃ, καὶ οὕτως ἐβαπτίζοντο. Εὐθέως δὲ, βαπτιζομένων αὐτῶν, τὰ ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ ἀληθῆς πλοῖα τῶν ἐπερχομένων πολέμιων διεφθείροντο Whether the author here records the magician's express purpose in invoking the spirits, or only a current explanation of the purpose, it is clear that the spirits

¹ A. V.

² Reste Arabischen Heidentums, p. 192.

³ Herod. I 165; cf. Hor. Epodes, XVI, 17-21.

⁴ ἐκέλευε κατεῖναι ἐς τὸ πέλαγος πεδέων ζεύγος (Herod. VII 35).

⁵ Cf. note I, p. 307.

⁶ Hist. Fab., I, 1; see E. A. W. Budge, Egyptian Magic, pp. 91 ff.; Thompson, op. cit., pp. 155-156.

served only to infuse life into the waxen figures, which were then regarded as possessed of the personality of the enemy. The destruction of the one was therefore *ipso facto* the destruction of the other and in precisely the same manner.

We must now consider the defixiones once more, but at greater length.¹ The significant part of Aud. 104 reads: Q(ui) mihi ma(n)telu(m) in[u]olauit, | sic liqu(e)at <c> com-(odo) aqua | ell[a] m[u?]ta, ni q(ui) eam [sa]luauit | Annius etc. The statement that the *defigens* invoked the deities of the spring in which the tablet was flung, rests solely on a conjecture suggested by the next tablet to be considered.² This tablet (Aud. 129) in symbol consigns a certain Q. Letinius Lupus to the waters of the spring "uti uos A[quae] feruentes, | siu[e] u[os] Nimfas [si]ue quo alio no[m]ine uoltis adpe[l]lari, uti uos eu[m] interemates | interficiates | intra ann[um] itum (= istum)". The meaning of this is beyond dispute. But the *defixio* from Salernum (Aud. 210) requires close scrutiny before its import becomes clear. The best editors read it—Locus capillo| ribus (=rius) | expect[at] cap[ut] su[um],³ a satisfactory English equivalent of which is—"The stream in which the hair now lies awaits the head whence it came". Now to the magician of all periods the hair is identical with the man.⁴ To submerge a hair is therefore tantamount to drowning the man. This tablet is then merely a leaden record deposited in a tomb to remind the lower deities that the victim was already magically drowned and to bind them to making this manner of death a reality.

The Magic Papyri, too, require a more detailed consideration than was given them earlier in this paper.⁵ One of the recipes tells how to overcome an opposing charioteer. The operator is to write his wish on a leaden plaque, perform certain ceremonies, and " παρὰ ποταμὸν ὅψε' ἡ μέσης νυκτὸς ὅπου ῥοὺς ἐστὶν ἡ παραρέον βαλανίου ἢ εἰς θάλασσαν δῆσας αὐτῶ (= αὐτὸ) σπάργω βάλε"⁶ The clause, ὅπου ῥοὺς ἐστὶν, is noteworthy. A little farther along the same formula offers a choice of depositories for the plaque:

¹ See p. 302, n. 4; p. 303, nn. 1-2.

² See Aud., p. 158, ad loc.

³ Aud., p. 281, ad loc.; Wünsch D. T. A., pr. xxix; Mommsen, CIL, X 511.

⁴ Doutté, op. cit., p. 445; Thompson, op. cit., pp. 148; 153; Frazer, op. cit., I 65-66; id., Adonis, Attis, Osiris, pp. 33-34; 184; Godfrey Leland, Etruscan Roman Remains in Popular Tradition, pp. 327-329.

⁵ P. 301, n. 2.

⁶ Wessely, Neue Gr. Zaub. Pap. CXXI, 443 ff.

"... ἡ ποταμὸν ἢ γῆν ἢ θάλασσαν ἤγουν ἢ θήκην εἰς φρέαρ. . . ."¹ Still another formula allows only the alternatives, a river or the sea.² A certain form of love-tablet in order to be effective had to be thrown into the sea, and its effectiveness could be greatly augmented if in the same operation magical characters were engraved on a copper nail taken from a wreck.³ Water from a wreck was stated to be potent in the performance of a certain exorcism; failing that, water from a sunken skiff is prescribed.⁴ Water from the former source is also useful as an ἀγωγή ἀσχήτου; he who employs it rightly can secure absolute control over the most ungovernable friend or foe.⁵ In the prosecution of a certain evil spell the head of a cock is to be severed and thrown into the river; the person officiating must then lay aside all his garments and immerse himself in the water.⁶

The Romagnola, also, furnishes material for this study. One of the recipes cited by Leland runs on this wise: "Go to a running river, and cast in the stone as violently and as spitefully as you can, saying:

'Non butto questa pietra,
Ma butto il bene e la fortuna
Della persona (name appears here) che il bene
Gli vada nell' acqua corrente
E così non abbia più bene'."⁷

Another recipe directs that to remove a certain bewitchment the apparatus causing it be cast into running water.⁸ This requirement calls to mind the *ρῶς* of the Magic Papyri.

In his valuable book on modern Greek folklore Lawson tells of a device for injuring an enemy in which the operator may either scrape away the representative image with a knife or throw it into a stream to be disintegrated by degrees; either process causes the victim slowly to pine away.⁹ Lawson remarks significantly that the sea is considered more satisfactory magically than any stream.¹⁰ He records another significant incident of the same order which we shall recite in full because of its patent symbolism.

¹ Ib. 456 ff.² Ib. 425 ff.³ Ib. 470 ff.⁴ Wessely, Gr. Zaub. Pap., Anast., 65 ff.⁵ Ib. 656 ff.⁶ Ib. 40 ff. That it is an evil spell is clear from the directions for a φυλακτήριον against it, which follow (78 ff.).⁷ Op. cit. p. 339.⁸ Ib. p. 354.⁹ Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion, p. 17.¹⁰ Ib. p. 20.

It concerns the wife of a priest "who from her wedding-day onward was a prey to various pains and ills. The priest tried in vain to relieve them by prayer, and finally called in a witch to aid him. After performing certain occult rites of divination, she informed him that he must dig in the middle of his court-yard. There he found a tin which on being opened revealed an assortment of pernicious charms—one of his wife's bridal shoes with a large nail through it, a dried-up piece of soap (presumably from the bridal-bath) stuck full of pins, a wisp of hair . . . all in a tangle, and lastly a padlock. The nail and pins were at once pulled out and the hair carefully disentangled, with the result that the woman was freed from her pains and her complicated ailments. But the padlock could not be undone, and was thrown away into the sea, with the result that the woman remained childless".¹

Similar practices are found among the Celts. As late as 1815 witches have made use of the so-called cursing-wells by casting into them leaden tablets, or suitable substitutes, inscribed with the name of a victim and a curse against him. The spirit dwelling in the well was supposed to put such imprecations into effect.² The Scotch Highlanders are said even yet to seek the death of an enemy by fashioning a rude clay image of him, sticking it full of pins, nails, or glass, and then tossing it into a stream to decompose in the running water. In this case the symbol is effective singly.³

Besides the body of the foregoing material, which is of the order of execration, there are many half-religious, half-magic rites performed to secure rain and fertility. Reference can be made to these *en bloc*.⁴ Most of these find their climax in the submersion of effigies of Death or of old men, or in some cases in the submersion of living men. While there is without doubt some connection between the water expected from heaven and the water of the streams used in the rites, yet the uppermost idea is that the drenching sympathetically puts an end to the old and

¹ *Ib.* p. 17.

² J. A. MacCulloch, *The Religion of the Ancient Celts*, pp. 196-197.

³ Frazer, *op. cit.*, I, p. 68; F. B. Jevons, *Anthropology and the Classics*, Lecture IV, p. 110, quoting from *The Albany Review*, iii, 17, p. 532.

⁴ Frazer, *op. cit.*, I, 276; 277; III, pp. 234-240; 246-248; 253; W. Warde Fowler, *Roman Festivals*, pp. 111-121; *id.*, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People*, pp. 54-56.

undesirable condition whether it be drought or sterility, or both. These practices have a vogue ranging from the borders of India to the centres of European civilization.

In reviewing the preceding *materia magica* one observes that certain of the rites manifestly favor Wünsch's explanation. Defixio no. 129 of Audollent's compilation and the tablet of the Celtic cursing-well are in this class and can probably be associated inferentially with the Hylas-legend. Some passages of the Magic Papyri, too, are apparently corroborative, but scrutiny shows them to be by no means definite and convergent in their testimony. For example, while Papyrus CXXI, 425 ff., 456 ff., 470 ff., and Papyrus Anastasy, 65 ff., might at first sight seem to support Wünsch, yet on the other hand the *ῥοοὶς* of Papyrus CXXI, 443 ff. would logically be linked with the running stream which overwhelms and gradually wears away the tokens of the Assyrian, the Tuscan, the Greek and the Scotch Highlander. But even these supports are of doubtful strength, for in the use of water from a sunken skiff in lieu of water from a wreck the symbolism outweighs the suggestion of the intermediacy of water-spirits. In fact, one might safely make the same assertion in regard to the water from an actual wreck, for a wreck does not of necessity imply loss of life, and if the implication is at all present it must have been driven into it through the pressure of analogy, which in magic is identical with symbolism. But all the ceremonies of this order detailed by the compilers of the Magic Papyri are uniformly and satisfactorily explained, if we regard the submersion of the symbols of the victim as the submersion of the victim himself.

When we turn to the residue of the ceremonies we perceive that this explanation is the only one possible. The wording of the Assyrian charm is brimming over with symbolism—"she hath cast *me* into the river flood"; "may this be *as* her ship"; "*like* her ship"; "may her spell be wrecked". The enchantress and the enchanter are parrying one another with the same sort of weapon—the false equation of analogy and identity. This, too, was the weapon which Jeremiah put into the hands of Seraiah to wield against Babylon, for the austere monotheist would never have tried to carry out God's behest through the agency of demons. "*Thus* shall Babylon sink", he directs Seraiah to say as the stone-laden scroll disappears in the Euphrates. It was the "*thus*" that was to over-

throw Babylon. The Phocaeans followed this same line of thought; for, as the sea would possess and control the iron to all eternity, so would their oath possess and control them. By the exercise of this same principle Nectanebus defended his country, for his invocation of the gods is plainly secondary in importance. So, too, the peasant of the Romagnola removes a bewitchment from his own life and reduces his enemy to misery, and the modern Greek and the Scotch Highlander bring their enemies to the grave. This symbolism is seen, perhaps, most clearly in the last feature of the Greek charm described at length by Lawson: the padlock was thrown into the sea and the woman remained childless. Just as the deep water was virtually an irrefragable seal on the unopened lock, so an unfathomable ocean of destiny raised itself against the woman's chances of bearing offspring. Further, two of the defixiones themselves add strength to our theory. In Audollent, D. T., No. 104, is registered the desire that the thief may languish just as the water of the fountain ebbs away—*sic liqueat comodo aqua*. This is nothing else than pure symbolism. According to the current interpretation of the Salernitan tablet (Aud. 210), the drowning of the hair is the drowning of the man, an equation possible only to the literal symbolist. Finally, to these conclusions we must add the evident wish behind the water-burial of the effigy or proxy of Death, namely, that just as the waters encompass and overwhelm the tokens, so may the conditions for which the tokens stand be restrained and rendered inoperative.

We are now in a position to sketch the primitive psychology of submerged defixiones, a psychology which was in all probability always present, though in varying degrees of prominence. The symbol, whatever it was, was inscribed with the victim's name. Now to the worker in magic the name is the man himself.¹ The submersion of the symbol is, therefore, the submersion of the man, and the longer the symbol can be kept under water the more permanent will be the victim's plight. Hence it was desirable to hurl the symbol far out into the current of a stream where it would be safely hidden and subject to rapid cor-

¹ Audollent, op. cit., p. xlix; Thompson, op. cit., p. 148; Budge, op. cit., 157; 160-161; Franz Cumont, *Religions orientales dans le paganisme romain*, p. 143; W. Sherwood Fox, *The American Journal of Philology*, XXXIII, 1, Supplement, p. 35.

rosion. But it was still more desirable to cast it into the deep waters of the sea where the eye and hand of man would not reach until the day when the sea will give up its magically as well as its literally dead. Looked at from this point of view this magic practice had everything to commend it to the superstitious and vindictive. It was at once an inexpensive, ready, rapid, secret, and withal self-explanatory process for visiting one's wrath on an enemy.¹ But frequent observation of the fact that the process often failed to bring about the results expected, gradually undermined popular faith in the efficacy of these and other forms of simple symbolism. Men then turned to their gods for aid, arguing that though the gods controlled nature, they in their turn controlled the gods, as their religion clearly demonstrated. At this stage began a very curious blending of magic and religion.² In spite of their weakened faith in symbolism as an isolated principle, men were too conservative to make a clean break with their former modes of thought, and consciously retained a certain measure of symbolism in conjunction with the devices which they from time to time borrowed from religion. If we regard the class of defixiones under discussion as products of various periods of this stage of magic, they will all be uniformly and satisfactorily explained.

W. SHERWOOD FOX.

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY.

¹ Probably the true reason why so few defixiones are extant is that this form of magic vengeance was the most popular of all. I share this view with F. B. Jevons, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

² Frazer, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 238 ff.